

**Testimony on behalf of the North Central Regional Mental Health Board
Before the Appropriations Committee
IN OPPOSITION TO
An Act Implementing the Governor's Proposed Budget Recommendations
for Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)
February 23, 2017
Krista Johnson, South Windsor, CT**

Senators Osten and Formica, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee

My name is Krista Johnson and I am writing this letter as a representative for the North Regional Mental Health Board. I am against the bill to combine 3 line items, grants for mental health, substance use and employment opportunities into one line item and reducing funding for those services by an additional 4.7 million dollars.

My recommendation would be to continue to keep these as 3 separate line items. I began working as a Vocational Counselor in 2008. I work with many clients who are diagnosed with mental illness, many have co-occurring substance use as well, however not all of them. Our job is to evaluate their readiness to work, their motivation and their ability. Some clients may be ready to work and have the ability however are not motivated, or may meet one or two of the three (of course these are not the only criteria). My point is that by combining these line items, and cutting money from the DMHAS budget for these services, it is effectively damaging the chances for those who are ready, willing and motivated to work. It also brings long waiting periods for those who need immediate care for mental health or substance abuse which may be life threatening, due to the decrease in funding for agencies that receive DMHAS grants to provide those services.

Working brings about a sense of empowerment to most clients. Not to mention those who are determined are more likely to do things like return to school, possibly get off of disability or state assistance, and by working, they are contributing to the economy. This is a good thing.

To cut these funds and combine these line items would be a travesty for those people who need and want it most, so again I say that I am against this bill.

I would like to thank the committee for allowing me the opportunity to give testimony.

Thank you.

Krista Johnson